

STACK
ANNEX

5

020

617

A

0
0
0
0
3
5
3
6
2
3



00 SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

ornia
nal
y

Ex Libris

C. K. OGDEN



*To Sydney Montagu Samuel
from J. R. Wilkinson.*

THE
PROPHECY OF SAINT ORAN

AND
OTHER POEMS.

BY
MATHILDE BLIND.

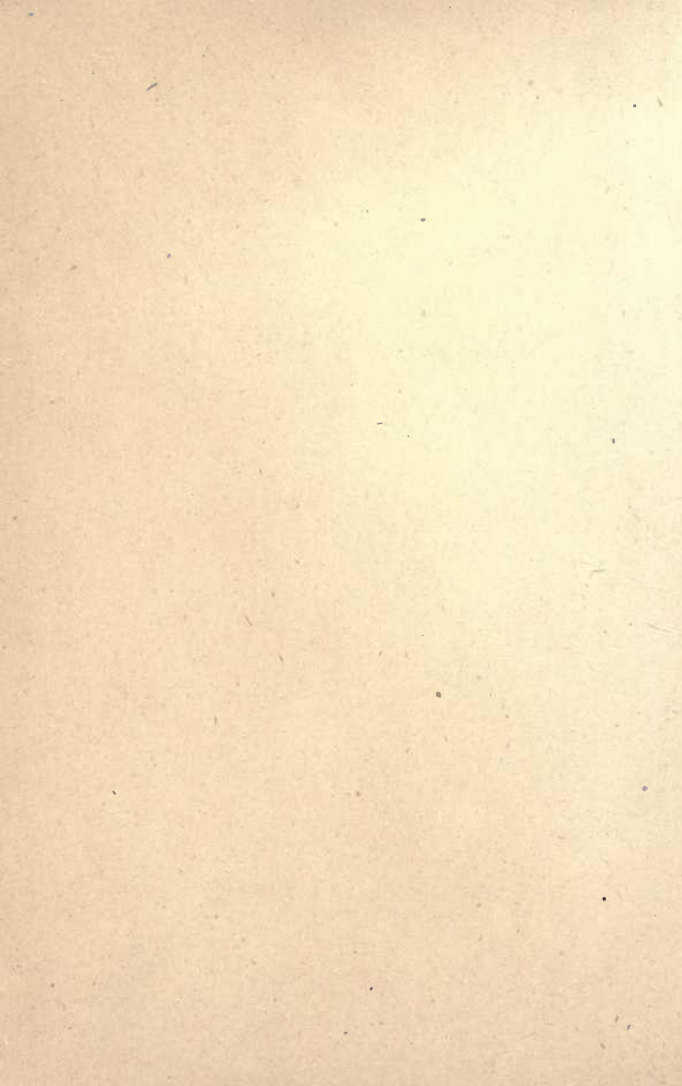
LONDON :
NEWMAN AND CO.
43 HART STREET, BLOOMSBURY, W.C.

MDCCCLXXXI.

MB.

Hazell, Watson, and Viney, Printers, London and Aylesbury.

TO
A MEMORY.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE PROPHECY OF ST. ORAN	I

POEMS :

LOVE-TRILOGY	69
DEAD LOVE	76
A DREAM	77
LOVE'S PHANTOM	79
SNOW OR SNOWDROPS?	80
PAUPER POET'S SONG	82
SUNDERED PATHS	84
LINES	86
LOVE AND THE MUSE	88
SONG	90
SONG	91
IN SPRING	92
RENUNCIATION	94
THE ABANDONED	103

SONNETS :

	PAGE
CLEAVE THOU THE WAVES	111
MANCHESTER BY NIGHT	112
TO THE OBELISK DURING THE GREAT FROST, 1881	113
TO MEMORY	114
DESPAIR	115
SLEEP	116
HAUNTED STREETS	117
ΑΝΑΓΚΗ	118
THE DEAD	119
CHRISTMAS EVE	120
NEW YEAR'S EVE	121

POEMS :

PERFECT UNION (W. K. C., 3rd March, 1879) .	125
THE STREET-CHILDREN'S DANCE	129

THE PROPHECY OF ST. ORAN.

THE PROPHECY OF ST. ORAN.

PART I.

“Earth, earth on the mouth of Oran, that he may blab no more.”
Gaelic Proverb.

I.

THE storm had ceased to rave: subsiding
slow

Lashed ocean heaved, and then lay calm and
still ;

From the clear North a little breeze did blow

Severing the clouds : high o'er a wooded hill

The slant sun hung intolerably bright,

And spanned the sea with a broad bridge of
light.

II.

Now St. Columba rose from where he sat
Among his monkish crew ; and lifting high
His pale worn hands, his eagle glances met
The awful glory which suffused the sky.
As soars the lark, sweet singing from the sod,
So prayer is wafted from his soul to God.

III.

For they in their rude coracle that day
Shuddering had climbed the crests of mountainous wave,
To plunge down glassy walls of shifting spray,
From which death roared as from an open grave ;
Till, the grim fury of the tempest o'er,
Bursts on their ravished sight an azure shore.

IV.

Ah ! is this solid earth which meets their view,
Or some still cloud-land islanded on high ?

Those crags are too aërially blue,
Too soft those mountains mingling with the sky,
And too ineffable their dewy gleam,
For aught but fabric of a fleeting dream.

V.

Entranced they gaze, and o'er the glimmering
 track
Of seething gold and foaming silver row :
Now to their left tower headlands, bare and
 black
And blasted, with grey centuries of snow,
Deep in whose echoing caves, with hollow sighs,
Monotonous seas for ever ebb and rise.

VI.

Rounding these rocks, they glide into a deep
And tranquil bay, in whose translucent flood
The shadows of the azure mountains sleep :
High on a hill, amid green foliage, stood

A square and rough-hewn tower, whose time-
bleached stone,
Like some red beacon, with the sunset shone.

VII.

A few more vigorous strokes, and the sharp
keel
Grates on the beach, on which, inclining low
Their tonsured heads, the monks adoring kneel ;
While St. Columba, his pale face aglow
With outward light and inward, lifts on high
The Cross, swart outlined on the burning sky.

VIII.

Impassive, though in silent wonder, stood
The islesmen while these worshipped, on their
shore,
A thorn-crowned figure nailed upon the wood,
From whose pierced side the dark blood seemed
to pour ;

While on the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
They loudly called as brow and breast they crost.

IX.

Spoke now their Master, in a voice whose ring
Was like the west wind's in a twilight grove :
"Glad tidings to this sea-girt isle we bring,
Good tidings of our heavenly Father's love,
Who sent His only Son,—oh, marvellous
Deep love!—to die that He might ransom us."

X.

"Come! listen to the story of our Lord!
Sweet Jesus Christ, a child of lowly birth,
Whom in the manger the wise kings adored,
For well they knew Him Lord of Heaven and
Earth,
With myrrh and spice they journeyed from the
far
Prophetic East, led by the Pilgrim Star :

XI.

“And when the star stood still, and mildly shone
Above a shed where lay the new-born child,
They hailed Him God’s only-begotten Son,
Saviour of sinners and Redeemer mild ;
Eve’s promised seed, when she with streaming
 eyes
Saw the bright sword wave her from Paradise.

XII.

“For we are children of a fallen race,
Our sins are grievous in the Father’s sight,
Death was our doom, but that by heavenly grace
God sent His Son to be a steadfast light,
Which calmly shining o’er life’s troubled wave,
The storm-tossed souls of erring men might save.

XIII.

“Go unto Him, all ye that toil and weep,
Ye that are weary with the long day’s load ;

He is the Shepherd watching o'er His sheep,
He leads His flock along the narrow road ;
And when He hears the bleating lamb's alarm
He folds the weak one in His sheltering arm.

XIV.

"Ah, tender Shepherd, who didst love us so,
Choosing to die that we Thy flock might live ;
What bitter anguish, ah ! what heavy woe
To think, O Lord ! that mortal hands should give
This wound that cleaves Thy side, that mortal
scorn
In mockery crowned Thee with the barren
thorn !"

XV.

Sad was Columba's face, his words were slow
As though reluctant to the piteous tale—
But now his eyes with sacred rapture glow,
And his wan features kindle, like a pale

Dissolving cloud through which the moon is
shed :

He speaks of Christ re-risen from the dead.

XVI.

He ceased, then cried : "Glory unto the Lord
Whose mercy is as boundless as the sea ;
Fruitful to-day makes He my feeble word,
For with faith's eye an ancient chief I see,
Whose bark o'er the blue deep is drawing nigh,
He comes to be baptised before he die."

XVII.

Scarce had he ended when towards the land
A wicker boat sped swiftly o'er the bay ;
There by the Pictish chieftain, hand in hand,
Her golden locks entangled with his grey,
His grandchild sat, lit by the level rays ;
The loveliest and the last of all her race.

XVIII.

They hailed the Chief as to a sea-worn stone
Two fishers bore him ; and his muffled sense
Struggled with feeble eld to seize the tone
Of the Saint's voice, as he in words intense
Proclaimed the saving truth of gospel lore,
Then with his hands baptised the Chieftain hoar.

XIX.

And when the holy dew had wet his brow,
And his wan lips tasted the sacrament,
His head against Columba's breast sank low,
And o'er his face a smile of rapt content
Played softly, smoothing out the lines of care
Which joy and grief and toil had planted there.

XX.

Then on the spot where he has breathed his
last
They lay him, letting dust to dust return ;

Then one by one, as solemnly they cast
A little earth upon his grave, they turn
To the benighted heathen, look above,
And chaunt : " His soul is God's, and God is
love."

XXI.

A piteous cry and terrible then rung
Even like a very echo to the word
Upon the startled hearers, whom it wrung
With answering grief, as when along the chord
Of palpitating harp the breezes sigh
Each string responsive wails in sympathy.

XXII.

A maiden with wild eyes and streaming hair
And features white with horror rose aghast,
Unconscious of the pitying people's stare,
And on the new-made grave herself she cast

In utter desolation, till her frame
Convulsed by sobs shook like a wind-blown
flame.

XXIII.

“Oh father, father,” she at last made moan,
“My father’s father, last of all our race,
Hast thou gone too, and left me here alone
So helpless as I am, so weak to face
The dreadful shifts of war with all its woes,
Cold, hunger, shame, fear of insulting foes.”

XXIV.

“Nay, child, blaspheme not in thine agony !
Art thou not in our heavenly Father’s care ?
He who upholds the everlasting sky
Throughout the ages, suffers not a hair
Of thine to fall but that it is His will ;
Bless Him for joy, for sorrow bless Him still.

XXV.

“Yea ! clasp thine unused hands in prayer, and
lift

Thy still down-drooping eyes to Him above.
Is not the giver greater than His gift ?
Must not His love contain all lesser love
Of father, mother, brother, husband, wife—
The Alpha He and Omega of life ? ”

XXVI.

Thus spake Columba, burning to allay
The pains of earthly love with saving truth ;
But she, who deemed confusedly that they
With their sad rites had slain her sire, forsooth,
Was deaf to him, and ever made her moan,
“Hast thou gone too, and left me here alone ! ”

XXVII.

At last—when all his words and prayers had failed
To comfort or assuage the orphan's woe,

Who prostrate on the grave still wept and
wailed,—

Columba muttered as he turned to go :

“Nay, sooner parley with the roaring main
Than with a woman maddening in her pain.”

XXVIII.

So thus they left her, as she would not come,
Left her to night and a few firstling stars
That here and there from the celestial dome
Peered brightly through the narrow cloudy bars,
As though some great white seraph's lidless eyes
Were looking down on her from Paradise.

XXIX.

But one there was who could not rest in peace,
For pity of that maiden's lonely pain !
Was there no balm in Gilead to appease
Her wounded spirit ?—yea, might not he gain

That soul benighted to eternal bliss,
By teaching her God's love through grief like
this ?

XXX.

Thus Oran mused, the youngest and most fair
Of that devoted zealous little band
That now for many a laborious year
Followed Columba's lead from land to land,
Daring the danger of the narrow seas
To plant the Cross among the Hebrides.

XXXI.

Young, but most fervid of their brotherhood,
Fair Oran was, whose faith leaped like a sword
From out the sheath, and could not be subdued
When brandished in the service of the Lord,
To whom—as sparks leap upward from a fire—
His soaring thoughts incessantly aspire.

XXXII.

Yea, he must save her soul, that like a bark
Drifting without a rudder, rudely tossed
On life's rough sea, might founder in the dark,
In the abysm of hell engulfed and lost.
Thus musing, he retraced his steps once more
Towards the grave beside the sounding shore.

XXXIII.

"Arise, and let the dead bury their dead!"
He said to her still shedding stanchless tears.
Affrighted by his voice, she raised her head
With eyes dilated like a startled deer's ;
With lovely, longing, melancholy eyes,
She looked up at him with a dumb surprise.

XXXIV.

"Come unto Jesus, He will give thee rest,"
Oran began, but stammered as he spoke :

Why throbbed his heart so loudly in his breast,
As if impatient of the heavy yoke
Of faith, that curbed desire as soon as born,
That nipped the rose, but left its piercing thorn?

XXXV.

A moment has undone the work of years !
A single glance o'erthrown an austere saint !
And the clear faith, achieved with stripes and
tears
And midnight fasts and vigils, now grows faint,
And like a star lost in the new-born light
Flickers awhile, then fades into the night.

XXXVI.

Still Oran wrestles with the fiend within,
Striving to teach the gospel to the maid ;
He tells her of man's fall through deadly sin,
And of the Saviour who our ransom paid :

She, with her eyes now bent upon the ground,
Listens like one by strong enchantment bound.

XXXVII.

It was a clear and cloudless summer night,
Stars without number clustered in the blue,
Some like mere sparks of evanescent light
Receding infinite from mortal view,
Some with a steadier lustre softly glow,
Like golden flames or silver flakes of snow.

XXXVIII.

But lo! like some lost soul from heaven's height
Hurled headlong, shivering to its awful doom,
A wingèd star shoots dazzling through the
 night,
And vanishes in some stupendous gloom :
Thus once the brightest of the angels fell
Through yawning space into profoundest hell.

XXXIX.

And trembling for his own soul, Oran prayed :
" Oh blessed Virgin, whom the angelic quire
Rapturous adore ! immaculate Mother-maid !
Pure Queen ! make pure my heart of every fire
Which is not kindled on thy sacred shrine,
Of every thought not wholly, solely thine ! "

XL.

Even while the suppliant's lips devoutly move,
A heavenly face, though not the Virgin's, filled
His eyes with beauty, and his heart with love,
Till with dread rapture all his pulses thrilled :
A face whose heavenly innocence might well
Eradicate the very thought of hell.

XLI.

Perplexed, bewildered, breathless Oran stood,
Torn by the passions he had still suppressed

With macerations of the flesh and blood ;
But now this idol which enthralled his breast
With subtle witchcraft, snake-like seemed to hiss,
“Thine immortality for one long kiss!”

XLII.

“Get thee behind me, Satan !” wildly cries
The monk, and flees in horror from the place.
Did not the devil tempt him through those eyes
Burning like two fair lights in that fair face,
Till moth-like drawn in ever-narrowing rings
Towards the flame, his soul must scorch her
wings ?

XLIII.

Far o'er the moorland through the starlit night
He rushed, like one who flies in mortal fear
Of some dread enemy that dogs his flight,
And who, whate'er his speed, still draweth near :

Yea, though he shall outspeed the wingèd wind,
How fly the haunting thought of his own mind?

XLIV.

At last he knelt all breathless on the sod,
And gathered up his whole soul in one prayer,
Yea,—even as Jacob wrestled before God
While angels hovered on the heavenly stair,
He wrestled,—loudly calling on the Lord
To keep him from the sin his soul abhorred.

XLV.

When his long prayer was done, and the pale
priest
Rose cold with clinging vapour, one by one
The flickering stars went out, and in the East
The dim air kindled with the coming sun,
While in illimitable sheer delight
The holy larks rose worshipping the light.

PART II.

I.

THERE was a windless mere, on whose smooth
breast

A little island, flushed with purple bloom,
Lay gently cradled like a moorhen's nest :
It glowed like some rich jewel 'mid the gloom
Of sluggish leagues of peat and black morass,
Without or shrub or tree or blade of grass.

II.

But on the isle itself the birch was seen
With its ethereal foliage, like some haze
Floating among the rowan's vivid green ;
The ground with fern all feathered, and ablaze
With heath's and harebell's hyacinthine hue,
Was mirrored in the wave's intenser blue.

III.

This was the immemorial isle of graves,
Here, under nameless mound and dateless stone,
The generations, like successive waves,
Had rolled one o'er the other, and had gone
As these go, indistinguishably fused
Their separate lives in common death confused.

IV.

And here amid the dead Columba chose
To found God's holy house and sow His word ;
Already here and there the walls arose,
Built from the stones imbedded in the sward ;
These did the natives without mortar pile,
As was the ancient custom of their isle.

V.

For many of them to the work were won
By reverence for the saint, and thus apace

The chapel grew which they had first begun
As dedicate to God's perpetual praise ;
So many of the monks again were free
To give thought wholly to their ministry.

VI.

And ever first in hastening to his task
St. Oran was, though last to seek repose ;
Columba's best beloved, he still would ask
For heaviest share of duty, while he chose
Rude penances, till shadow-like he grew
With fasts and vigils that the flesh subdue.

VII.

Yet there was that which would not be subdued—
A shape, a presence haunting every dream ;
Fair as the moon that shines above a flood,
And ever trembles on the trembling stream ;
Sweet as some gust of fragrance, unaware
Stealing upon us on the summer air.

VIII.

Even so it stole upon his ravished heart,
Suffusing every fibre with delight,
Till from his troubled slumber he would start,
And, as with ague shivering and affright,
Catch broken speech low murmuring in his ears,
And feel his eyelids ache with unshed tears.

IX.

But it befell one windy afternoon,
While monks and men were busied with the roof,
Laying the beams through which the sun and moon
Might shed their light as yet without reproof,
That there came one across the lonely waste
Toward these men of God, crying in haste,—

X.

“Ye say ye came to save us, save us then !
Save us if ye spake truth, and not a lie !

Famine and fever stalk among us,—men,
Women, and children are struck down and die!
For lo, the murrain smites our cowering sheep,
The fishers haul no fish from out the deep.

XI.

“Ye tell us that your God did multiply
A few small fishes, wherewithal He fed
A multitude; in sooth, if ’tis no lie,
Then come, ye holy men, and give us bread!
For they are starving by the waterside,—
Come then, and give us bread,” he loudly cried.

XII.

He was a man inspiring dread surprise,
Half-naked, with long glibs of bristling hair
In fiery meshes tumbling o’er his eyes,
Which, like a famished wolf’s from out its lair,
Glanced restlessly; his dog behind him came,
Whose lolling tongue hung down like scarlet flame.

XIII.

“ Let me arise, and go to them withal ! ”
Cried Oran, flinging down his implement :
“ This heavy tribulation is a call
From the Most High ; a blessed instrument
To compass their salvation : let me go
Teach them what mercy worketh in their woe.”

XIV.

“ Go then, my son, and God go with thee still,
While I abide to speed His temple here,”
Said St. Columba ; “ and thy basket fill
With herbs and cordials, also wine to cheer
And bread to feed the poor, so that their days
May still endure to God’s eternal praise.”

XV.

Then Oran and that wild man forth did fare,
And o’er the little lake they rowed in haste,

And mounting each a small and shaggy mare,
They ambled o'er that solitary waste,
Then through a sterile glen their road did lie
Whose shrouded peaks loomed awfully on high.

XVI.

When for a mile or two they thus had gone,
The mountains opened wide on either hand,
And lo, amid those labyrinths of stone
The sea had got entangled in the land,
And turned and twisted, struggling to get free,
And be once more the immeasurable sea.

XVII.

It was a sorcerous, elemental place,
O'er which there now came rushing from the
plain—
Like some dark host whom yelling victors chase—
A moving pillar of resistless rain

Shivering the gleaming lances in its flight
Against the bastions of each monstrous height.

XVIII.

Fast, fast it raced before the roaring gale,
With shrieks and frenzied howlings that did
 shake
The very stones with long-resounding wail,
And in outlying gorges would it wake
The startled echo's sympathetic scream,
Then whirling on would vanish like a dream,—

XIX.

Would vanish dream-like, whither no man knows,
Fading afar in vaporous gulfs of light,
While the wet mountain-tops flushed like a rose,
And following the spent tempest in its flight
Its hues ethereal mantling o'er the gloom,
There glowed the rainbow's evanescent bloom.

XX.

And while that rain still drenched him to the
skin,

St. Oran, unappalled, intoned a psalm,
And lifting up his voice amidst the din,
He sang, "We laud Thee, Lord, through storm
and calm,

In the revolving stars we see Thine hand,
The sun and moon rise as Thou dost com-
mand.

XXI.

"We laud Thee for the evening and the morn,
And the prolific seasons' changing boon,
For singing-birds, and flowers, and ripening
corn,

For tides that rise and fall beneath the moon ;
As in a mirror darkling do we see
The shadow that Thou castest on the sea."

XXII.

Up many a wild ascent, down many a steep
Clothed with scant herbage, rode that battered
pair,

Where lay the bleaching bones of mangled sheep,
And carrion crows wheeled hoarsely in the air ;
At last through mist and darkness they espied
Small lights that twinkled by the waterside.

XXIII.

There in dark turf-built hovels close to earth
Lay the poor sufferers on their beds of heath,
Gnawed to the very bone by cruel dearth,
Cold to the marrow with approaching death ;
Thither came Oran like some vision bright,
And ministered to each one through the night.

XXIV.

And so dispensing alms he went and came,
Stooping to enter the last house of all ;

There, by the peat-fire's orange-coloured flame,
Whose flashes fitfully did rise and fall
On the smoke-blackened rafters—sat a crone
Ancient it might be as the lichened stone.

XXV.

Fast through her bony fingers flies the thread,
And as her foot still turns the whirring wheel,
She seems to spin the yarn of quick and dead !
But oh, what makes St. Oran's senses reel ?
Whose is the shape clad in its golden hair
That turns and tosses on the pallet there ?

XXVI.

Like some wan water lily veiled in mist
When puffs of wind its tender petals shake,
Whose chalice by the shining moonbeams kissed
Sways to and fro upon the swelling lake,

So white—so wan—so wonderfully fair,
Showed Mona tossing mid her golden hair.

XXVII.

What should he do? Ah, whither should he
turn?

Why had God let this trial come again?
Her beauty, half-revealed, did straightly burn
Through his hot eyeballs to his kindling brain.
Was it his duty to go hence or stay?
He wavered—gazed on her—then turned away.

XXVIII.

But that old woman tottered to the door
And clutched his cassock with a shaking hand,
And mumbled, "Priest, ah! dost thou shun the
poor?"

They say that ye go bragging through the land
Of some new God called Christian Charity;
But in our need ye turn from us and fly."

XXIX.

So spake the crone, but Oran bowed his head
And murmured, "If thou bid'st me, I abide."
With downcast eyes he turned towards the bed
In fervent prayer low kneeling by its side :
At last he rose, pale, cold, and deadly still,
With heart subdued to his stern Maker's will.

XXX.

Thus through her fever did he tend the maid,
Who babbled wildly in delirious trance
Of her lost home, and her loved kindred laid
In alien earth—and of a countenance
Fair as a spirit's comforting her pain,
But soon withdrawn to its own heaven again.

XXXI.

All this unflinching would the monk endure,
And having cured her body's sickness, strove

With double zeal her sicker soul to cure :
But when he told her of the Saviour's love,
Of sin, and its atonement, and free grace,
She looked in puzzled wonder on his face.

XXXII.

She could not understand his mournful creed,
Nor knew, poor child, of what she should repent,
Nor why her heart was wicked, and had need
That some poor pitying God should once have
 spent
His blood for her five hundred years ago—
Ancestral voices never told her so !

XXXIII.

She could not understand, but she could feel !
And while she sat before him by the flame
The pathos of his pleading voice would steal
Sweeter than sweetest music through her frame,

And as the ocean murmur in a shell
Through her dim soul his solemn accents swell.

XXXIV.

He was the air she breathed—all living things
Were pale reflections of him—as the hart
In desert places thirsts for water-springs,
Even thus for him she thirsted in her heart ;
To her it seemed as if life's aim and end
Were just to lay her hand within his hand.

XXXV.

Her eyes were full of love as stars of light,
And pierced the cold obstructive atmosphere
Of his joy-killing creed, and did ignite
His inmost spirit of sense with fire as clear
And radiant as their own—their beaming
looks
Mingled as flames of fire or meeting brooks.

XXXVI.

Was he not young and beautiful?—in face
Like to that radiant god whose flame divine
The Druid worshipped in those younger days
Ere sin had stamped the green earth with its sign,
Had made the loveliness of flowers a snare,
And bid frail man of woman's love beware.

XXXVII.

Oh, not for him, through all the lonely years
Never for him a woman's love might bloom ;
Her smiles would never cheer him, nor her tears
Fall softly on his unlamented tomb ;
Never till quenched in death's supreme eclipse
His lips would know the sweetness of her lips.

XXXVIII.

Oh God ! would nothing quench that secret fire,
Nor yet assuage that hunger of the heart ?

To feel this flagellation of desire,
To be so near, yet evermore apart,
Never to clasp this woman as a wife—
This was the crowning penance of his life.

XXXIX.

But lo ! one day at dusk they were alone,
The rain was beating down on roof and wall,
The round of earth with solid rock and stone
Had turned phantasmal in its misty pall :
They were alone, but neither spake a word—
Only their hearts in throbbing might be heard.

XL.

Whose is that low involuntary cry
That like a flash of lightning shook each frame
With thrill electric ? Simultaneously
Their yearning lips had sobbed each other's name !
With swift instinctive dread they move apart
While magnet-like each draws the other's heart,

XLI.

What boots it thus to struggle with his sin,
So much more sweet than all his virtues were ?
Like a great flood let all her love roll in
And his soul stifle mid her golden hair !
And so he barter his eternal bliss
For the divine delirium of her kiss !

XLII.

What cares he for his soul's salvation now ?
Let it go to perdition evermore
For breaking that accursed monastic vow
Which cankers a man's nature to the core ;
For he had striven as never mortal strove,
But than his Lord a mightier lord was Love.

PART III.

I.

"A CURSE is on this work!" Columba cried ;
And with their dark robes flapping in the gale,
The frightened monks came hurrying to his
side,
And looked at one another turning pale ;
For every night the work done in the day
Strewn on the ground in wild confusion lay.

II.

"A curse is on this work!" he cried again
As his keen glances swept each face in turn :
"Behold, God smites us in the hurricane,
And in the lightning doth His anger burn.
Brethren, some secret deadly sin there is
Known to the Lord for which we suffer this.

III.

“ Why is it that the elements combine
Against us, raging in relentless ire
Against our humble wave-encircled shrine ?
That air, that water, that consuming fire
Inveterately war against this fane
Which we would build, but ever build in vain ?

IV.

“ Why is it that the billows of the deep
Rise in revolt against the rock-bound shore,
Lashing themselves to fury on each steep,
Till inland lakes, awakening at the roar,
Now roar in mad response, and swell amain,
Till broadening waters hide the drowning plain ?

V.

“ One night, ye know, from out the imminent
gloom,
Shrouding the firmament as in a pall,

The levin, like a spirit from the tomb,
Leaped with a ghastly glare, and in its fall
Struck the new roof-tree with reverberate crash,
And left a little heap of shrivelled ash.

VI.

“ Another night—why need I tell the tale ?—
The winds in legions thundered through the air,
Battering the walls with sudden gusts of hail,
They rushed with piercing shrieks and strident
 blare
Athwart the cloisters and the roofless hall,
Till stone by stone fell from the rocking wall.

VII.

“ And then the very water turned our foe,
For in the dead of night it slowly crept,
Soft wave on wave, till in its overflow
It deluged all the basement while we slept ;

And where the convent yesterday did stand,
There spreads the lake as level as my hand.

VIII.

“ And then, when slowly after many days
The waters had subsided to the main,
And through the toilsome hours we sought to
raise
Our ever-shattered structure once again,
Behold ! the earth herself with stone and block
Shudders convulsive and begins to rock.

IX.

“ For lo, the fiends let loose at God’s command
Burrow and delve in subterranean gloom,
Till like the troubled ocean all the land
Heaves to and fro as tottering to its doom :
The quiet graves themselves now bursting yawn,
God’s holy house once more lies overthrown !

X.

“ And now hath come the hour of darkest need—
The people have abandoned us ! They wail
That their dead fathers rage against our creed,
That in dark rushing cloud and roaring gale
The houseless spirits ride and fill the air
With lamentations for the gods that were !

XI.

“ The Lord rebukes us in His wrath ! I ask,
Again I ask, what man among you all
Living in deadly sin, yet wears the mask
Of sanctity ? Yea, let him cleanse his soul,
Confessing all the crying guilt of it,
Or go for ever to the burning pit ! ”

XII.

Again his eagle glances swept each face,
While the assembled monks, with anxious sigh,

Asked with a thrill of horror and amaze,
“Was it indeed a judgment from on high?”
As with one voice then cried the saintly throng,
“Not I—not I—know of that hidden wrong.”

XIII.

And with uplifted arms they loudly prayed,
“Oh Lord, if in our midst the traitor bides
Who breaks the sacramental vow he made,
And takes Thy name in vain, and basely hides
His wicked ways from every eye save Thine—
Let his dark sin stand forth, and make a sign.”

XIV.

All day expectant, waiting on His will,
The monks in reverential silence stand
Beneath the rustling pine-trees of the hill,
Whence their eyes sweep across the level land :
Lo, from afar the vision of a maid
Comes o'er the shining pools the flood has made.

XV.

Swiftly she came across the devious track,
With glimmering waterways on either hand ;
Against the luminous vapour at her back
Her dusky form looms mystically grand ;
While in the liquid crystal by her side
The phantom of herself seems still to glide.

XVI.

Was she a spirit risen from the grave
When its foul depths lay open to the sky,
Or ghost of Druid priestess wont to rave
Her blasphemous oracles in times gone by,
Who ventured thus upon the sacred isle
For ever barred against a woman's wile ?

XVII.

But no ! as nearer and more near she draws,
They see a maiden with the wild deer's grace

Bounding from stone to stone, whose beauty awes
These Christian fathers, riveting their gaze ;
For like the full moon framed in amber air
Her face shone mid the glory of her hair.

XVIII.

Then in their midst all breathless did she stand,
But paused bewildered and as one affrayed,—
Even as a swift wave making for the strand
With all its waters gathering to a head
Delays, suspended with back-fluttering locks,
Then breaks in showers of brine upon the rocks.

XIX.

So for a moment motionless she stood,
From monk to monk her wildered glances stray ;
Immovable, like figures carved in wood,
These waited what their master's lips would say,
But ever and anon, in mute appeal,
Her piteous eyes to Oran's face would steal.

XX.

Only for one brief moment she delayed,
Struck speechless at his cold averted mien,
Then with a long low moan she blindly swayed
With her fair arms towards him, and in keen
Unutterable anguish cried aghast—

“Is this a dream, or am I mad at last ?

XXI.

“Dost thou not know me, Oran—Oran mine ?
Look on me ; I am Mona, I am she
For whom thy soul so thirstily did pine !
Nay, turn not from me ! Say, art thou not he
Whose mouth to my mouth yearningly was
pressed,
Whose dearest head lay pillowed on my breast ?

XXII.

“Dear, be not wroth with me in that I came ;
For our love’s sake look not so stern and grave ;

Ah, surely thou wilt think me free from blame
For having dared to break the word I gave,
When I have told thee what has brought me
here,
How sore distraught I was with grief and fear.

XXIII.

Oh love, when night came swooping o'er the sea,
And on the poor folk's tired eyelids sleep
Fell like a seabird's feather, stealthily
I climbed the jagged overhanging steep
Whose giddy summit looks towards thy home,
Wondering if haply I might see thee come.

XXIV.

When, lo ! the solid cliff began to shake
As in an ague fit, and while I stood
Trembling, methought the maddening sea would
break
Its everlasting limits, for the flood

Came crashing in loud thunder o'er the land,
And swept our huts like seaweed from the sand.

XXV.

Then a great horror seized me, and I reeled
And fell upon my face, and knew no more.
When from that trance I woke, the sun had
wheeled

Far up the sky and shone upon the shore,
And there beneath the bright and cloudless sky
I saw a heap of mangled corpses lie.

XXVI.

Shrieking I fled, and paused not in my fright
Fleeing I knew not whither, but my feet
Flew swift as ever arrow in its flight
To thee, my love! Hast thou no smile to greet
Thy Mona with,—no kiss? For pity's sake,
Speak to me, Oran, or my heart will break."

XXVII.

All held their breath when she had made her
moan :

All eyes were fixed on that pale monk, who
stood

Unnaturally quiet—like a stone

Whose flinty sides are fretted by the flood—

When St. Columba turned on him, and said,

“I bid thee speak,—man, knowest thou this
maid ?”

XXVIII.

Then answered him the other, but his words

Rang hollow like the toll of funeral bell,

And on his humid brows like knotted cords

The livid veins and arteries seemed to swell,

Facing the accusation of his eyes,

“Master, I know her not—the woman lies !”

XXIX.

A hum of indignation, doubt, alarm,
Ran through their circle, but none durst to speak
Before the Master, who with lifted arm
And eyes whence fiery flashes seemed to break,
Cried very loudly, "Is it even so,—
Then help me God but I will rout this foe!

XXX.

"Look, brethren, on this lovely maiden, fair
As virginal white lilies newly blown,
Fresh as the first breath of the vernal air,
Pure as an incarnation of the dawn ;
Look on that golden glory of her hair,—
It is a man-trap, Satan's deadliest snare.

XXXI.

"Brethren, let the two eldest of you seize
This fiend in angel's garb, this beast of prey

Which lies in wait behind that snowy fleece
Lusting to take our brother's name away,
And blast his fame for purest sanctity
With lies forged by our common enemy !

XXXII:

“ Seize her, and bear her to that frightful steep
Where, bristling with huge pier and jagged spire,
The spectre rock which overhangs the deep
Pierces the ghastly clouds like frozen fire ;
There standing, fling her from its giddiest cone—
Into the ocean fling her, like a stone.”

XXXIII.

The sentence had gone forth ; the monks obeyed ;
Two venerable brothers, deep in years,
First crossed themselves, then seized the struggling maid
In their stout arms ; despite her prayers and tears,

And wild appeals on him she called her love,
They with their burden now began to move.

XXXIV.

But he, whose human flesh seemed petrified
To marble, started from that rigid mood,
And blindly running after them, he cried,
“ Hold ! hold ! stain not your hands with innocent blood ;
I broke my vow, I am the sinner, I
Seduced the maid,—spare her, and let me die.”

XXXV.

They halted midway, marvelling, aghast,
When St. Columba thundered to them “ Stay ! ”
His voice was like a dreadful battle-blast,
And startled coveys rose and whirred away :
“ He broke his vow, he is the sinner ; aye
Do as he says—spare her, and let him die !

XXXVI.

“Yea, well I saw the gnawing worm within,
But wished to tear the mask from off his soul,
That in the naked hideousness of sin
He might stand pilloried before you all :
This is a judgment on me from above
For loving him with more than woman’s love.”

XXXVII.

His voice here failed him and he hid his face ;
And as before some imminent storm all sound
In earth, air, ocean ceases for a space,
There fell a breathless silence on that mound ;
But when Columba raised his voice once more,
It seemed the muffled thunder’s boding roar.

XXXVIII.

“ Oh perjured one ! oh breaker of thy vow !
Oh base, apostate monk, whose guilt abhorred

Weighed down our walls and laid our chapel low !
Thy life shall be an offering to the Lord,
And with thy blood we will cement the fane
Which for thy sin's sake still was built in vain.

XXXIX.

“ Seize him, and bear him to that dolorous site
Where mid our ruined cells the chapel stands
Whose holy walls and columns every night
Have fallen beneath the blow of dæmon hands ;
There, living, bury him beneath its sod,
And so propitiate the Lord our God.”

PART IV.

I.

IT is the night : across the starless waste
Of silent heaven the solitary moon
Flits like a frightened maid who flies in haste,
And wild with terror seems to reel and swoon,
As in her rear the multitudinous clouds
Follow like spectral huntsmen in their shrouds.

II.

And sometimes the wild rout o'ertakes its prey,
And holds her captive in the lowering sky,
But ever and anon she bursts away,
And her white orb floats lustrously on high,
And with its lambent flame transmutes the
haze
Into a living halo for her face.

III.

And far o'er black morass and barren moor
The fitful splendour of the moonlight falls,
Its broken eddies sweep across the floor,
And dance in chequered silver on the walls,
And flood the chapel's grave-encircled site
With sudden flashes of unearthly light.

IV.

And as the unquiet moonlight comes and flies
Athwart the little roofless house of prayer,
Like some lost spirit strayed from Paradise
Or dæmon-angel of the realms of air,
A pallid shape flits through the open door
And flings itself, low wailing, on the floor ;

V.

And wailing, wailing, lay there in its pain,
When suddenly it snatched from out the sod

Some late-forgotten spade, while tears like rain
Poured from its eyes, enough to melt the clod,
And digging hard the small breach grew apace,
Till the soil lay like molehills round the place.

VI.

But through the silence suddenly there swells
Along the gusty breaths of midnight air
The mellow tinkling sound of magic bells,
Such as the pious brethren love to wear,
To keep the fiends and goblins off that prowls
For ever near to catch a tripping soul.

VII.

And as the monks, chanting a solemn hymn,
Draw nigh the chapel to perform their rite,
That wailing shape flies far into the dim
Recess behind the altar full of night ;
While they with burning torches move in file
To consecrate afresh their sacred pile.

VIII.

Three days, three nights have fled since in that spot,
Where fiends and dæmons revelled unforbid,
They buried that false monk who was a blot
Upon their rule : but since the earth has hid
His bones accursed, God's sun has shone again,
Nor has fresh ill assailed their prospering fane

IX.

Which now they enter, singing hymns of praise,
Columba at their head—when lo, behold
The grave yawns open and a bloodless face,
The face of him they knew, rose from the mould :
Slowly he rose from the incumbent clay
Lifting the white shroud in the moonlight grey.

X.

Slowly his arm beneath the winding-sheet
He waved three times, as though to bid them hear ;

Then in the moonlight rose he to his feet
Showing his shrunken body, and his sere
Discoloured hair, and smouldering eyes that lie
Sunk in their sockets, glaring hot and dry.

XI.

Slowly he raised his voice—once rich in tone
Like sweetest music, now a mournful knell
With dull sepulchral sounds, as of a stone
Cast down into a black unfathomed well—
And murmured, “Lo, I come back from the
grave,—
Behold, there is no God to smite or save.

XII.

“Poor fools! wild dreamers! No, there is no
God;
Yon heaven is deaf and dumb to prayer and
praise;

Lo, no almighty tyrant wields the rod
For evermore above our hapless race ;
Nor fashioned us, frail creatures that we be,
To bear the burden of eternity.

XIII.

“ Hear it, self-torturing monks, and cease to wage
Your mad, delirious, suicidal war ;
There is no devil who from age to age
Waylays and tempts all souls of men that are ;
For ever seeking whom he may devour,
And damn with wine and woman, gold and power.

XIV.

“ Deluded priests, ye think the world a snare,
Denouncing every tender human tie !
Behold, your heaven is unsubstantial air,
Your future bliss a sick brain’s phantasy ;
There is no room amid the stars which gem
The firmament for your Jerusalem.

XV.

“ Rejoice, poor sinners, for I come to tell
To you who hardly dare to live for fright ;
There is no burning everlasting hell
Where souls shall be tormented day and night :
The fever ye call life ends with your breath ;
All weary souls set in the night of death.

XVI.

“ Then let your life on earth be life indeed !
Nor drop the substance, snatching at a shade !
Ye can have Eden here ! ye bear the seed
Of all the hells and heavens and gods ye made
Within that mighty world-transforming thought
Which permeates the universe it wrought—

XVII.

“ Wrought out of stones and plants and birds
and beasts,
To flower in man, and know itself at last :

Around, about you, see what endless feasts
The spring and summer bountifully cast !
“ A vale of tears,” ye cry—“ if ye were wise,
The earth itself would change to Paradise.

XVIII.

“ The earth itself—the old despisèd earth,
Would render back your love a thousandfold,
Nor yet afflict the sons of men with dearth,
Disease, and misery, and drought and cold ;
If you would seek a blessing in her sod,
Instead of crying vainly on your God.]

XIX.

“ Cast down the crucifix, take up the plough !
Nor waste your breath which is the life in
prayer !
Dare to be men, and break your impious vow,
Nor fly from woman as the devil’s snare !

For if within, around, beneath, above
There is a living God, that God is Love."

XX.

"The fool says in his heart, There is no God,"
Cried St. Columba, white with Christian ire
"Seize Oran, re-inter him in the sod
And may his soul awake in endless fire :
Earth on his mouth—the earth he would adore,
That his blaspheming tongue may blab no more."

XXI.

Then like swart ravens swooping on their prey
These monks rushed upon Oran ; when there
came
One gliding towards them in wild disarray
With hair that streamed behind her like a flame
And face dazed with the moon, who shrilly cried,
"Let not death part the bridegroom from his
bride."

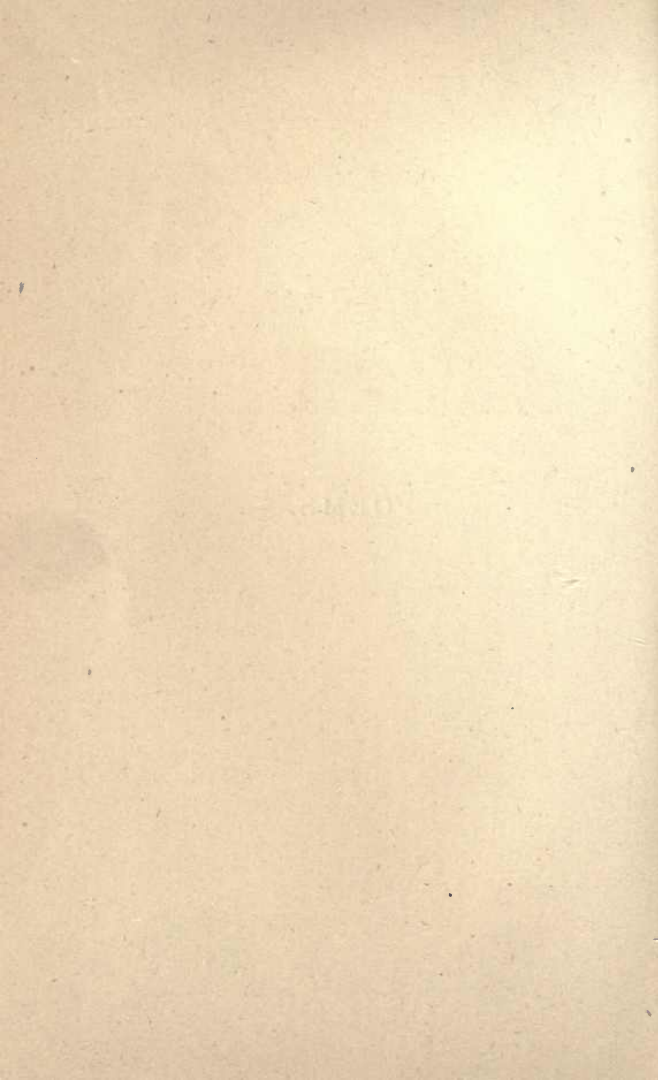
XXII.

But deeming her some fiend in female guise,
They drive her forth with threats, till, crazed with
fear,
Across the stones and mounded graves she flies
Towards that lapping, moon-illumined mere ;
And like a child seeking its mother's breast
She casts her life thereon, and is at rest.

XXIII.

And while the waves close gurgling o'er her head,
A grave is dug whence he may never stray,
Or come back prophesying from the dead,—
All shouting as they stifle him with clay :
“Earth on his mouth—the earth he would adore,
That his blaspheming tongue may blab no more.”

POEMS.



LOVE-TRILOGY.

I.

SHE stood against the Orient sun,
Her face inscrutable for light ;
A myriad larks in unison
Sang o'er her, soaring out of sight.

A myriad flowers around her feet
Burst flame-like from the yielding sod,
Till all the wandering airs were sweet
With incense mounting up to God.

A mighty rainbow shook, inclined
Towards her, from the Occident,
Girdling the cloud-wrack which enshrined
Half the light-bearing firmament.

Lit showers flashed golden o'er the hills,
And trees flung silver to the breeze,
And, scattering diamonds, fleet-foot rills
Fled laughingly across the leas.

Yea Love, the skylarks laud but thee,
And writ in flowers thine awful name ;
Spring is thy shade, dread Ecstasy,
And life a brand which feeds thy flame.

II.

WINDING all my life about thee,
Let me lay my lips on thine ;
What is all the world without thee,
Mine—oh mine !

Let me press my heart out on thee,
Crush it like a fiery vine,
Spilling sacramental on thee
Love's red wine.

Let thy strong eyes yearning o'er me
Draw me with their force divine ;
All my soul has gone before me
Clasping thine.

Irresistibly I follow,
As wherever we may run
Runs our shadow, as the swallow
Seeks the sun.

Yea, I tremble, swoon, surrender
All my spirit to thy sway,
As a star is drowned in splendour
Of the day.

III.

I CHARGE you, O winds of the West, O winds
with the wings of the dove,
That ye blow o'er the brows of my Love, breath-
ing low that I sicken for love.

I charge you, O dewes of the Dawn, O tears of the
star of the morn,
That ye fall at the feet of my love with the sound
of one weeping forlorn.

I charge you, O birds of the Air, O birds flying
home to your nest,
That ye sing in his ears of the joy that for ever
has fled from my breast.

I charge you, O flowers of the Earth, O frailest
of things, and most fair,
That ye droop in his path as the life in me
shrivels consumed by despair.

O Moon, when he lifts up his face, when he seeth
the waning of thee,
A memory of her who lies wan on the limits of
life let it be.

Many tears cannot quench, nor my sighs extin-
guish, the flames of love's fire,
Which lifteth my heart like a wave, and smites
it, and breaks its desire.

I rise like one in a dream when I see the red
sun flaring low,
That drags me back shuddering from sleep each
morning to life with its woe.

I go like one in a dream, unbidden my feet
 know the way
To that garden where love stood in blossom with
 the red and white hawthorn of May.

The song of the throstle is hushed, and the
 fountain is dry to its core,
The moon cometh up as of old; she seeks, but
 she finds him no more.

The pale-faced, pitiful moon shines down on the
 grass where I weep,
My face to the earth, and my breast in an anguish
 ne'er soothed into sleep.

The moon returns, and the spring, birds warble,
 trees burst into leaf,
But Love once gone, goes for ever, and all that
 endures is the grief.

DEAD LOVE.

MOTHER of the unfortunate, mystic form,
Who calm, immutable, like oldest fate,
Sittest, where through the sombre swinging gate
Moans immemorial life's encircling storm.
My heart, sore stricken by grief's leaden arm,
Lags like a weary pilgrim knocking late,
And sigheth—toward thee staggering with its
weight—
Behold Love conquered by thy son, the worm !

He stung him mid the roses' purple bloom,
The Rose of roses, yea, a thing so sweet,
Haply to stay blind Change's flying feet,
And stir with pity the unpitying tomb.
Here, take him, cold, cold, heavy and void of
breath !
Nor me refuse, O Mother almighty, death.

A DREAM.

IN dreams I met my Love : he stood alone,
A sadness like pale mist lay on his face ;
His eyes met mine, then as with anguish prone,
Or yet in shame—he turned away his gaze.

I made no moan, but even as one in sleep
Helplessly murmurs, murmuring fell his name,
Like tears which tremulous eyelids may not
 keep,
Or flicker of involuntary flame.

Sharply he turned : I neither moved nor spoke,
But all life's pent-up passion gathered form,
Till on our eyes the full-orbed lovelight broke,
Even as the sun will break upon a storm,

And opening wide his arms, he stood ! But I,
Like a pale wave with backward fluttering crest,
Wavered awhile, then with a rapturous cry,
Shivering in ecstasy, fell on his breast.

LOVE'S PHANTOM.

SHUT out day's wintry beams !
Sleep, brood upon my brain !
For sweet sleep bringeth dreams
And love again !

Love cold and wan and sere
Heaped over with tears and snows ;
Lo, born within its bier,
Blooms like a rose !

Its fragrance fills each vein,
Its fervour flushes my heart,
I feel through breast and brain
Its rapturous smart ;
The look, the tone, the deep
Supreme smile of delight :
Ah, fickle as love, false sleep,
Why take thy flight ?

SNOW OR SNOWDROPS?

Is it snow or snowdrops' shimmer
Whitens thus the bladed grass,
With a faint aërial glimmer,—
Spring or winter, which did pass?
For the sky is dim and tender
With the evanescent light,
And the fading fields are white,
White with snow or snowdrops, under
The fair firstling stars of night.

Little robin, softly, cheerly
Piping on yon wintry bough,
Why have all the fields that pearly
Iridescence, knowest thou?

Did old Winter, grim and hoary,
Aim a parting dart at Spring
As she fled on azure wing,
Or did she with rainbow glory
In his face her snowdrops fling?

PAUPER POET'S SONG.

SUN, moon, and stars, the ample air,
The birds shrill whistling everywhere,
Fields white with lambs and daisies ;
The pearls of eve, the jewelled morn,
The rose rich blowing on the thorn,
The glow of blush-rose faces ;
The silver glint of sun-smit rain,
The shattered sun-gold of the main,
And heaven's sweet breath that moves it ;
The earth, our myriad-bosomed nurse,
This whole miraculous universe
Belongs to him who loves it !

Why fret then for the gold of this,
The fame of that man, or the bliss,
Or such another's graces ?

Oh heart that chim'st with golden verse,
My heart, thou art the magic purse
Which all dull trouble chases ;
Thine too fruition of all fame
When the live soul, as flame with flame,
Weds the dead soul that moves it ;
Then sing for aye, and aye rehearse,
This whole miraculous universe
Belongs to him who loves it !

SUNDERED PATHS.

TWO travellers, worn with sun and rain
And gropings o'er dim paths unknown,
Meet where long separate ways have grown
To one, and then diverge again.

They halt anigh the green wayside,
Where groves pant with the impassioned song
Of nightingales ; wild roses throng
There round them leaning side by side.

As close and still more close they cling,
Like some weird tale—once more in dreams
Lived through with ghastlier horror—seems
That old, cold, lonely wayfaring.

Oh close sweet clasp of hands ! oh sweet
Close beat of heart on happy heart ;
Beating as though no more apart
Their pulses ever again should beat !

One look of love ! one long embrace !
One kiss that welds two lives in one !
And lo, the sudden lifted sun
Lights their slow feet on separate ways.

Fledged by strong love, their wingèd speech
Is borne awhile from soul to soul,
Then ever-widening waters roll
And drown their voices each from each.

LINES.

THOU camest with the coming Spring !
With swallows, and the murmuring
Of unloosed waters, with the birth
Of daisies dimpling the green earth.

And when the perfect rose of June
Responded to the golden noon,
My heart's deep core, suffused with bliss,
Broke into flower beneath thy kiss.

But now the swallows seaward fly,
The winds in chorus wail, " Good-bye !"
The dead leaves whirl, and like a leaf
My heart shakes on the gusts of grief.

And yet awhile earth's flowerless breast
In lethal folds of snow will rest ;
On thee too heart, with all thy woe,
Death falls one day like falling snow.

LOVE AND THE MUSE.

STRUCK down by Love in cruel mood,
That ever I met Love I rued,
 Bleeding and bruised I lay,
Wet was my face as with the salt sea spray.

A lovely Muse on sparkling wing
A painless elemental thing,
 Free as bird did float,
Swift flames of song light leaping from her throat.

And being more pitiful than Love
Stooped glowing from her path above,
 And an unearthly kiss
Laid on my lips : Muse, answer, what is this ?

In dreams or drunkenness divine
My life is all transfused with thine ;
Like bubbles swept along,
My tears dissolve on cataracts of song.

SONG.

OH haste while roses bloom below,
Oh haste while pale and bright above
The sun and moon alternate glow,
To pluck the rose of love.

Yea, give the morning to the lark,
The nightingale its glimmering grove,
Give moonlight to the hungry dark,
But to man's heart give love !

Then haste while still the roses blow,
And pale and bright in heaven above
The sun and moon alternate glow,
Pluck, pluck the rose of love.

SONG.

ALL my heart is stirring lightly
Like dim violets winter-bound,
Quickening as they feel the brightly
Glowing sunlight underground.

Yea, this drear and silent bosom,
Hushed as snow-hid grove but now,
Breaketh into leaf and blossom
Like a gleaming vernal bough.

Oh the singing, singing, singing !
Callow hopes that thrill my breast !
Can the lark of love be winging
Back to its abandoned nest ?

IN SPRING.

THE young birds shy twitter
In hedges and bowers,
Fields brighten and glitter
With dewdrops and flowers.
Over flood, over fallow,
Impelled by old yearning,
The nest-building swallow
Exults at returning ;
For dark days and hoary
Are routed and over,
Dark Winter is gone ;
Resplendent in glory,
The earth meets her lover,
Her bridegroom the Sun.

Must I alone sorrow,
Despairingly languish,

Breaks never a morrow

On the night of my anguish ?

The jubilant gladness

In bird, beam, and blossom,

But deepens the sadness

That weighs on my bosom.

Oh, Spring, in whose azure

Wake follow the starling,

The daisy, the dove ;

Sweet spendthrift of pleasure,

Bring also my darling,

Oh bring me my love !

RENUNCIATION.

Wenn ich Dich liebe was geht es Dich an ?

I.

THE air is full of the peal of bells,
The rhythmical pealing of marriage bells ;
 But athwart and above their ringing—
Throbbing clear like the light of a star
Lost in the sunrise—I hear afar
 The skylark's jubilant singing.

II.

The clouds all woollen and white on high,
Like flocks of heavenly sheep go by,
 Go through heaven's sapphire meadows;

While here on the earth's green meadows, deep
In sapphire flowers, our earthly sheep
Loll in their loitering shadows.

III.

Come, we will sit by the wayside here,
They must cross this field to the chapel, dear,
The loved by the side for her lover.
Grey, through the glimmer of vernal green,
Its time-worn tower may just be seen
Through the yews which curtain it over.

IV.

Nay, little brother, why should I pine ?
Dare a violet ask that the sun should shine,
The shining sun shine for it solely ?
Lowly it lifteth its meek blue eye,
And yields up its soul to the sun on high,
Nor asks for love, loving so wholly.

V.

He passed by the garden where, snow-white and red,
I tended the flowers which give us our bread,
 And watered my lilies and roses ;
He passed and repassed both early and late,
And lingering, often would lean on the gate
 While I tied for him one of my posies.

VI.

Day after day would he pass this way,
And his smiling was sweet as the flowers of May,
 Or the scent of the bee-haunted clover ;
And a softer flame seemed to light up his eye
Than the lily-white moon's in the rose-hued sky,
 Ere the blush of the May-day is over.

VII.

Aye, day after day he would stop on his way,
While the trees were in leaf and the meadows were gay,
 And the curled little lambs were grazing ;

As he went, or returned in the waning light
From the smoke-capped city whose lamps by
 night
Turn the black clouds red with their blazing.

VIII.

It's a year to-day when the young sun sets
Since I gave him that first bunch of violets
 From the root on the grave of our mother.
Though thou seest them not with the bodily eye,
The language of flowers much better than I
 I know that thou knowest, my brother.

IX.

Violets—then golden daffodils
Which the light of the sun like a wine-cup fills—
 Tall tulips like flames upspringing—
Golden-brown wallflowers bright as his locks—
Marigolds—balsams—and perfumed stocks
 Whose scent's like a blackbird's singing.

X.

You see, my darling, I never forget !
Aye, those were your own very words—ere yet
Our father lost his all in yon city,
Where the people, they say, in their struggle for
gold,
Become like wild beasts, and the feeble and old
Are trampled upon without pity.

XI.

Poor father was better to-day : for the smile
Of the sun seemed to gladden him too for awhile
As he sat by the bright little casement,
With buttercups heaped on his knees without
stint,
Which, deeming them childishly fresh from the
mint,
He counted in chuckling amazement.

XII.

The air is full of the peal of bells—

The rhythmical pealing of marriage bells !

And there floats o'er the fields, o'er the fallows,
Borne on the wind with the wind-blown chimes,
From the old house hidden in older limes,
A chatter of maidens and swallows.

XIII.

Ah, give me the flowers !—the last year was all
In tune with the flowers from the spring to the fall,
And with singing of birds in the bowers ;
And once—ah, look not so angry, dear !—
He whispered so softly I scarce could hear,
“ You yourself are the flower of all flowers ! ”

XIV.

But oh, when the wind was loud in the trees,
When the fluttering petals snowed down on the leas,

And the dim sun went out like an ember,
He stood by the gate all drenched with the mist,
And I gave him my last Christmas rose, which
 he kissed
For the last time that last of November.

XV.

Say, could he help if a hope as sweet
As the wild thyme had sprouted under his feet?
 If his face in my heart is enfolden,
As the sun-smit globes of the summer rain
Reflect and hold and refract again
 The sun, the eternally golden.

XVI.

He cometh, he cometh, oh brother, there!
Ah would that you saw the glint of his hair,
 For he looks like that saint in the story
Whom you loved so to hear of in days of old, .

Till he lit up your dreams with his curls of gold,
Exhaling a mystical glory.

XVII.

The unseen wings of the morning air
Fan his brow and ruffle his hair
As he steps with a stately measure ;
White daisies under his feet are spread,
White butterflies hover above his head,
White clouds high up in the azure :

XVIII.

Pelt him with sunlit April rain,
Rain which ripens the earth-hid grain,
Which brings up the grass and the heather!
Hark at the peal of the bridal bells,
How their musical chiming swells and swells
As they enter the church door together.

XIX.

Let us go hence now—'tis over—the twain
One will they be when they pass here again :
All my flowers in their pathway I scatter ;
Though he forget me as yesterday's rose,
My heart with a sweet tender feeling o'erflows :
If I love him, to whom can it matter ?

XX.

Yea, let us go now ; the stile, love, is here :
Henceforth I live but for thee. What ! a tear
Splashed on thy hand ? Nay, a drop from the
shower
That has passed over, for yon, on that dark
Ominous cloud, dearest brother, the arc
Of the Lord's bow now breaks into flower.

THE ABANDONED.

SHE sat by the wayside and wept, where roses,
red roses and white,
Lay wasted and withered and sere, like her life
and its ruined delight ;
Like chaff blown about in the wind whirled roses,
white roses and red,
And pale, on night's threshold, the moon bent
over the day that was dead.

She sat by the wayside and wept ; far over the
desolate plain
A noise as of one that is weeping re-echoed in
wind and in rain,
And the long dim line of the spectral poplars
with dolorous wail
Nodded their bald-headed tops as they chattered
with cold in the gale.

She sat by the wayside and wept in a passion of
vain desire,
And her weak heart fluttered and failed like the
flame of a faltering fire,
Fluttered and failed in her breast like the broken
wing of a bird
When its feathers are dabbled with gore, and the
low last gurgle is heard.

And behold, like balm on her soul, while she sat
by the wayside and wept,
There came a forgetting of sorrow, a lulling of
grief, and she slept ;
Yea, like the wings of a dove when cooing it
broods on the nest,
So the wings of slumber about her assuaged and
filled her with rest.

And a light that was not the sun's nor the
moon's light illumined her brain ;

From afar in the country of dreams three maidens
 stole over the plain,
Three loveliest maidens they were, like roses, red
 roses and white ;
And behold the earth and the heavens were
 glorified in their light.

And the first of the maidens was fair, as fair as
 the blue-kirtled Spring,
When she comes with a snowfall of blossoms
 and a rustling of birds on the wing,
When a glimmer of green like a tide rolls over
 the woodland and vales,
And odours are blown on the winds with the
 song of the nightingales.

The second was loftier of stature, a huntress of
 grief ;
The wilderness glowed as she passed and broke
 into blossom and leaf ;

Yea, it seemed that her upturned eyes, with
their fathomless gaze,
Could pierce to the shining stars through the
veil of the noonday blaze.

But the third was a splendour incarnate, a
luminous form,
Thrilling with raptures that keep the heart of
the cold earth warm,
Who hidden far in the mystical glory of quivering
rays
Sets the whole world on fire for an absolute
sight of her face.

But darkling ever they see her, and ever as
through a veil,
For if naked she lightens upon them, their lives
must shrivel and fail,
Must fail and shrivel consumed by that burst of
insufferable light,

As a tree set on fire by lightning which burns
to the ground in a night.

The first one she kissed her cheek, her cheek
grew pallid and wan :

“Goodbye,” she cried, “we must part ; I am
Youth, and I follow the sun ;

I am Youth, and I love to build in the heart that
is buoyant and gay ;

Goodbye, we shall meet not again,” she cried, as
she fluttered away.

The second she kissed her eyes, then the glamour
went out of their gaze,

Through the magical show she beheld life staring
her straight in the face ;

With a terrible Gorgon stare that turned her
heart into stone—

“Adieu,” she sighed, “I am Hope, all is over
between us and done.”

The third one she kissed her lips, and the kiss
was a quenchless fire,
It burned up her life like a victim's in the flames
of a funeral pyre—
“Farewell,” she wailed, “I am Love,” and her
wings were spread as for flight—
It seemed like the wail of the wind as they left
her alone with the night.

SONNETS.

CLEAVE THOU THE WAVES.

CLEAVE thou the waves that weltering to and fro
Surge multitudinous. The eternal Powers
Of sun, moon, stars, the air, the hurrying hours,
The winged winds, the still dissolving show
Of clouds in calm or storm, for ever flow
Above thee ; while the abysmal sea devours
The untold dead insatiate, where it lowers
O'er glooms unfathomed, limitless, below.

No longer on the golden-fretted sands,
Where many a shallow tide abortive chafes,
Mayst thou delay ; life onward sweeping blends
With far-off heaven : the dauntless one who braves
The perilous flood with calm unswerving hands,
The elements sustain : cleave thou the waves.

MANCHESTER BY NIGHT.

O'ER this huge town, rife with intestine wars,
Whence as from monstrous sacrificial shrines
Pillars of smoke climb heavenward, Night inclines
Black brows majestic with glimmering stars.
Her dewy silence soothes life's angry jars :
And like a mother's wan white face, who pines
Above her children's turbulent ways, so shines
The moon athwart the narrow cloudy bars.

Now toiling multitudes that hustling crush
Each other in the fateful strife for breath,
And, hounded on by diverse hungers, rush
Across the prostrate ones that groan beneath,
Are swathed within the universal hush,
As life exchanges semblances with death.

TO THE OBELISK
DURING THE GREAT FROST, 1881.

THOU sign-post of the Desert ! Obelisk,
Once fronting in thy monumental pride
Egypt's fierce sun, that blazing far and wide,
Sheared her of tree and herb, till like a disk
Her waste stretched shadowless, and fraught with risk
To those who with their beasts of burden hied
Across the seas of sand until they spied
Thy pillar, and their flagging hearts grew brisk :

Now reared beside our Thames so wintry gray,
Where blocks of ice drift with the drifting stream,
Thou risest o'er the alien prospect ! Say,
Yon dull, blear, rayless orb whose lurid gleam
Tinges the snow-draped ships and writhing steam,
Is this the sun which fired thine orient day ?

TO MEMORY.

OH in this dearth and winter of the soul,
When even Hope, still wont to soar and sing,
Droopeth, a starveling bird whose downy wing
Stiffens ere dead through the dank drift it fall—
Yea, ere Hope perish utterly, I call
On thee, fond Memory, that thou haste and bring
One leaf, one blossom from that far-off spring
When love's auroral light lay over all.

Bring but one pansy : haply so the thrill
Of poignant yearning for those glad dead years
May, like the gusty south, breathe o'er the chill
Of frozen grief, dissolving it in tears,
Till numb Hope, stirred by that warm dropping rain,
Will deem, perchance, Love's springtide come again.

DESPAIR.

THY wings swoop darkening round my soul,

Despair !

And on my brain thy shadow seems to brood

And hem me round with stifling solitude,

With chasms of vacuous gloom which are thy lair.

No light of human joy, no song or prayer,

Breaks ever on this chaos, all imbrued

With heart's-blood trickling from the multitude

Of sweet hopes slain, or agonizing there.

Lo, wilt thou yield thyself to grief, and roll

Vanquished from thy high seat, imperial brain ;

And abdicating turbulent life's control,

Be dragged a captive bound in sorrow's chain ?

Nay ! though my heart is breaking with its pain,

No pain on earth has power to crush my soul.

SLEEP.

LOVE-CRADLING Night, lit by the lucent moon,
Most pitiful and mother-hearted Night!
Blest armistice in life's tumultuous fight,
Resolving discords to a spheral tune!
When tired with heat and strenuous toil of noon,
With ceaseless conflict betwixt might and right,
With ebb and flow of sorrow and delight,
Our panting hearts beneath their burdens swoon,

To thee, O star-eyed comforter, we creep,
Earth's ill-used step-children to thee make moan,
As hiding in thy dark skirts' ample sweep;
—Poor debtors whose brief life is not their own;
For dunned by Death, to whom we owe its loan,
Give us, O Night, the interest paid in sleep.

HAUNTED STREETS.

LO, haply walking in some clattering street—
Where throngs of men and women dumbly pass,
Like shifting pictures seen within a glass
Which leave no trace behind—one seems to meet,
In roads once trodden by our mutual feet,
A face projected from that shadowy mass
Of faces, quite familiar as it was,
Which beaming on us stands out clear and sweet.

The face of faces we again behold
That lit our life when life was very fair,
And leaps our heart toward eyes and mouth and hair:
Oblivious of the undying love grown cold,
Or body sheeted in the churchyard mould,
We stretch out yearning hands and grasp—the air.

A N A T K H.

LIKE a great rock which looming o'er the deep
Casts his eternal shadow on the strands,
And veiled in cloud inexorably stands,
While vaulting round his adamantine steep
Embattled breakers clamorously leap,
Sun-garlanded and hope-uplifted bands,
But soon with waters shattered in the sands
Slowly recoiling back to ocean creep :

So sternly dost thou tower above us, Fate !
For still our eager hearts exultant beat,
Borne in the hurrying tide of life elate,
And dashing break against thy marble feet.
But would Hope's rainbow aureole round us fleet,
Without these hurtling shocks of man's estate ?

THE DEAD.

THE dead abide with us ! Though stark and cold
Earth seems to grip them, they are with us still :
They have forged our chains of being for good or ill ;
And their invisible hands these hands yet hold.
Our perishable bodies are the mould
In which their strong imperishable will—
Mortality's deep yearning to fulfil—
Hath grown incorporate through dim time untold.

Vibrations infinite of life in death,
As a star's travelling light survives its star !
So may we hold our lives, that when we are
The fate of those who then will draw this breath,
They shall not drag us to their judgment bar,
And curse the heritage which we bequeath.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

ALONE—with one fair star for company,
The loveliest star among the hosts of night,
While the grey tide ebbs with the ebbing light—
I pace along the darkening wintry sea.
Now round the yule-log and the glittering tree
Twinkling with festive tapers, eyes as bright
Sparkle with Christmas joys and young delight,
As each one gathers to his family.

But I—a waif on earth where'er I roam—
Uprooted with life's bleeding hopes and fears
From that one heart that was my heart's sole home,
Feel the old pang pierce through the severing years,
And as I think upon the years to come
That fair star trembles through my falling tears.

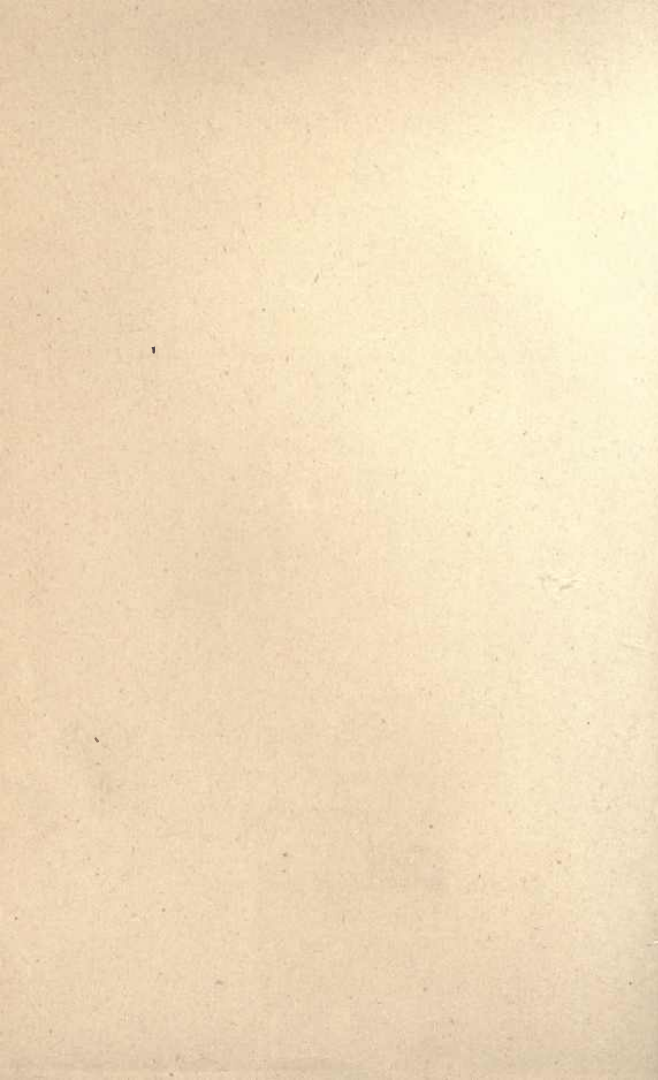
NEW YEAR'S EVE.

ANOTHER full-orbed year hath waned to-day,
And set in the irrevocable past,
And headlong whirled along Time's winged blast
My fluttering rose of youth is borne away :
Ah rose once crimson with the blood of May,
A honeyed haunt where bees would break their
fast,

I watch thy scattering petals flee aghast,
And all the flickering rose-lights turning grey.

Poor fool of life ! plagued ever with thy vain
Regrets and futile longings ! were the years
Not cups o'erbrimming still with gall and tears ?
Let go thy puny personal joy and pain !
If youth with all its brief hope disappears,
To deathless hope we must be born again.

POEMS.



PERFECT UNION.

W. K. C.—3RD MARCH, 1879.

“A free man thinks of nothing so little as of death ; and his wisdom is a meditation, not of death, but of life.”—
SPINOZA.

“DRAW back the curtain, wife,” he said ;
And, dying, raised his feeble head,
As all his gathered soul leaped sheer
Into his waning eyes, and yearned
After the journeying sun which turned
Towards that other hemisphere.

Then, as its incandescent bulk
Sank slowly, like the foundering hulk
Of some lone burning ship at sea,
His life set with it—bright as brief—
In that invincible belief
Of Man’s august supremacy.

Truth's vanward hero ! Calmly brave
Fronting the dumb unfathomed grave
With unintimidated eyes ;
Though not for him, beyond its night,
Resuscitated Hope alight
Prescient, on peaks of Paradise.

And like some solemn parting word
From one belovèd friend on board
Bound for some undiscovered shore,
To one who stands with straining gaze
To catch the last look of a face
Which he may see, ah never more—

So, ere he drifted to the deep
Unknowable, the utter sleep,
Out, out beyond life's harbour bar,
He whispered, " Perfect ! no one knows
How perfect ! " and his eyes did close
Even like a sun-extinguished star.

His eyes did close : I held his hand :
I loved, so came to understand
 The inmost working of his mind ;
Yea, in that clasp, I know not how,
Did not his life of life then flow
 Through mine, while mine was left behind ?

I know not how, and yet it seems
As in some prank of shifting dreams,
 That it was I who died, not he :
And then again, I know not how,
I feel new powers upheave and glow,
 And all his life that stirs in me.

I am no longer what I was ;
My nature is the pictured glass,
 Where he who lived lives on and on ;
All ye who loved him, ye may see
His spirit still investing me,
 As moonlight but reflects the sun.

For ever deepening grows his sway :
A voice cries in me night and day :
 “ He'll never die to me, his wife ;
In our strong love death hath no part ;
I hold and fold him in my heart—
 There he shall live while I have life.’

THE STREET-CHILDREN'S DANCE.

Now the earth in fields and hills
Stirs with pulses of the Spring,
Nest-embowering hedges ring
With interminable trills ;
Sunlight runs a race with rain,
All the world grows young again.

Young as at the hour of birth :
From the grass the daisies rise
With the dew upon their eyes,
Sun-awakened eyes of earth ;
Fields are set with cups of gold ;
Can this budding world grow old ?

Can the world grow old and sere,
Now when ruddy-tasselled trees

Stoop to every passing breeze,
Rustling in their silken gear ;
Now when blossoms pink and white
Have their own terrestrial light ?

Brooding light falls soft and warm,
Where in many a wind-rocked nest,
Curled up 'neath the she-bird's breast,
Clustering eggs are hid from harm ;
While the mellow-throated thrush
Warbles in the purpling bush.

Misty purple bathes the Spring :
Swallows flashing here and there
Float and dive on waves of air,
And make love upon the wing ;
Crocus-buds in sheaths of gold
Burst like sunbeams from the mould.

Chesnut leaflets burst their buds,
Perching tiptoe on each spray,

Springing toward the radiant day,
As the bland, pacific floods
Of the generative sun
All the teeming earth o'errun.

Can this earth run o'er with beauty,
Laugh through leaf and flower and grain,
While in close-pent court and lane,
In the air so thick and sooty,
Little ones pace to and fro,
Weighted with their parents' woe ?

Woe-predestined little ones !
Putting forth their buds of life
In an atmosphere of strife,
And crime breeding ignorance ;
Where the bitter surge of care
Freezes to a dull despair.

Dull despair and misery
Lie about them from their birth ;

Ugly curses, uglier mirth,
Are their earliest lullaby ;
Fathers have they without name,
Mothers crushed by want and shame.

Brutish, overburthened mothers,
With their hungry children cast
Half-nude to the nipping blast ;
Little sisters with their brothers
Dragging in their arms all day
Children nigh as big as they.

Children mothered by the street :
Shouting, flouting, roaring after
Passers-by with gibes and laughter,
Diving between horses' feet,
In and out of drays and barrows,
Recklessly, like London sparrows.

Mudlarks of our slums and alleys,
All unconscious of the blooming

World behind those housetops looming,
Of the happy fields and valleys,
Of the miracle of Spring
With its boundless blossoming.

Blossoms of humanity !
Poor soiled blossoms in the dust !
Through the thick defiling crust
Of soul-stifling poverty,
In your features may be traced
Childhood's beauty half effaced—

Childhood, stunted in the shadow
Of the light-debarring walls :
Not for you the cuckoo calls
O'er the silver-threaded meadow ;
Not for you the lark on high
Pours his music from the sky.

Ah ! you have your music too !
And come flocking round that player

Grinding at his organ there,
Summer-eyed and swart of hue,
Rattling off his well-worn tune
On this April afternoon.

Lovely April lights of pleasure
Flit o'er want-beclouded features
Of these little outcast creatures,
As they swing with rhythmic measure,
In the courage of their rags,
Lightly o'er the slippery flags.

Little footfalls, lightly glancing
In a luxury of motion,
Supple as the waves of ocean
In your elemental dancing,
How you fly, and wheel, and spin,
For your hearts too dance within.

Dance along with mirth and laughter,
Buoyant, fearless, and elate,

Dancing in the teeth of fate,
Ignorant of your hereafter
That with all its tragic glooms
Blindly on your future looms.

Past and future, hence away !
Joy, diffused throughout the earth,
Centre in this moment's mirth
Of ecstatic holiday :
Once in all their lives' dark story,
Touch them, Fate ! with April glory.

Uni

\$